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SUBJECT: Ontario Experts Discuss Environmental Politics and Economics with Ambassador Wilkins

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY: In preparation for the upcoming COP-11 meeting in Montreal, Ambassador Wilkins participated in a November 14 PA-organized meeting at the University of Toronto with leaders of environmental NGOs and academics concerned with environmental issues. Among the topics discussed were the necessity for emissions targets to encourage industry investment in clean air technology, the health implications of air pollution and the reluctance of the Canadian government to impose a carbon tax. The participants advocated a broad range of approaches to environmental concerns and praised the Ambassador for his willingness to go into the lions' den on environmental issues. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) On November 14 the U.S. Consulate General Toronto and the Munk Centre for International Studies organized a roundtable discussion on conservation and the environment with Ambassador Wilkins. Participants' opinions and advice to the Ambassador included:

--John Kirton, Director of the G8 Research Group at the University of Toronto, told the Ambassador that global environmental security is a major foreign policy issue for Canadians.

--Dan McDermott, Ontario Chapter Director of the Sierra Club, said many prominent Americans (including Governors Pataki and Schwarzenegger) recognize the importance of addressing climate change. He advanced that the Kyoto Protocol was the world's life boat. The Ambassador responded that the Bush Administration took the issue of climate change very seriously, noting the U.S. has done more to reduce emissions than many Kyoto Protocol signatories. The U.S. was funding a significant amount of research and development and is focused on reducing the intensity of greenhouse gas emissions. From 1990 to 2002, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions increased 13%. Between 2002 and 2003, U.S. greenhouse gas emissions decreased slightly.

--Julia Langer, Climate Change Specialist from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Canada, added Canada needed to put in place a serious plan to reduce emissions. She said the WWF had great hope for COP-11. The Kyoto Protocol targets end in 2012. Targets were useful motivators for governments. She argued that delegates in Montreal needed to set some new targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012.

--Barry Smit, Professor and Canada Research Chair in Global Environmental Change, University of Guelph, argued that a global agreement, rather than unilateral or bilateral efforts, was needed to spur significant progress in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions. He agreed that adaptation was also important to help poorer countries cope with the cost of reducing emissions in developing economies. Rich countries had not been doing enough in this area. Embassy Ottawa EST Counselor Curt Stone responded that the U.S. was working multilaterally to combat climate change through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Carbon Sequestration Forum, the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy, the Generation IV International Forum, the Methane to Markets Partnership, the Group on Earth Observations, and the Asia Pacific Partnership.

--Bruce Cox, Executive Director of Greenpeace, responded that the COP was "the" vehicle for dealing with climate change internationally. EST Counselor Stone reminded him that the U.S. spends \$2 billion per year on climate change science and an additional \$3 billion per year to develop new technologies. He said there will be huge differences in the approaches of delegations to the COP-11 meetings from developed countries like the EU (that want specific targets) and developing countries like China and India (that do not want targets that could retard economic development).

--Peter Victor, Professor, Centre for Environment and York Institute for Research and Innovation in Sustainability, said his students were very disappointed in both Canadian and U.S. efforts to reduce greenhouse gases. He observed

that the students hold the U.S. to a higher standard of behavior because it is bigger and more important than Canada. The U.S. needs to get the word out about how it is making progress in this important area, he observed. The CG offered to bring U.S. experts in to speak to Canadian university students.

--Louis Pauly, Director for International Studies, Munk Centre, at the University of Toronto, said NGOs should do more to educate the public and foster change. Efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should come from the grassroots, he argued, not always from the top down as government "edicts."

--John Wellner, Environment Program Director, Ontario Medical Association, noted air quality was a serious concern in Toronto. The amount of ground-level ozone had been increasing for the past 20 years, he said. The number of smog alert days and level of particulate matter in the air had also been increasing. U.S. policy to improve air quality was not aggressive enough. EST Counselor Stone replied the U.S. and Canada had worked closely together on air quality and have made great strides in reducing pollutants. He also noted that the U.S. wanted to negotiate with Canada a particulate matter annex to the Air Quality Agreement.

--Colin Isaacs, President of the CIAL Group, said Canada expected to see an overhaul of the Clean Development aspects of the Kyoto Protocol at COP-11. The U.S. should participate in those discussions, he argued. Isaacs said intensity was key to establishment of meaningful targets. Delegates in Montreal should set a global target and then distribute responsibility for attaining that goal. He suggested linking targets to exports.

--Ross McKittrick, Environmental Economics Professor, University of Guelph, said the U.S. should streamline the Clean Air Act's New Source Review process to facilitate new private sector investment. He also noted that the U.S. has an enviable record on addressing environmental problems, but needs to do a better job of making its accomplishments clear to Canadians and others.

13. (U) Also participating in the roundtable were:

--Tom Adams, Executive Director, Energy Probe;

--David Bell, Professor, Faculty of Environment Studies, York University;

--Jo Anne St. Goddard, Executive Director, Recycling Council of Ontario;

--Dan Hammond, President, Transport2000 Canada/Toronto;

--Adele Hurley, Director, Program on Water Issues, Munk Centre for International Studies;

--David Israelson, Partner, Media Profiles;

--Madeline Koch, Managing Editor, G8 Research Group;

--Ingrid Stefanovic, Director, Centre for Environment, University of Toronto;

--Usman Valiante, Partner and Senior Policy Analyst, Corporate Policy Group; and

--Erric (Skip) Willis, Vice President of Climate Change, ICF Consulting.

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